

Message Text

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13-11

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 DHA-02 SCCT-01 IO-11 /080 W

----- 101031

R 030649Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2653

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3046

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, RP

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE MUSLIM DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) DAO R120920Z FEB 1976; (B) MANILA 2114

BEGIN SUMMARY

DISORDER IN PHILIPPINE MUSLIM SOUTH IS ON THE UPSWING. RECENT UNREST INCLUDES CONTINUING ABDUCTIONS, KIDNAPPINGS, AND BUS AMBUSHINGS, PLUS FEB 23 ATTACK ON PORTION OF AGUS RIVER HYDRO POWER COMPLEX WHICH COULD, IF REPEATED, HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MINDANAO. AT SAME TIME, GOP HAS ANOUNCED ROLLUP OF MUSLIM (MNLF) ORGANIZATION IN COTABATO SECTOR RESULTING FROM DEFECTION OF KEY LEADER MUSLIMIN SEMA. GOVERNMENT IS MEANWHILE PREPARING TO RESUME STAGE-SHOW "PEACE TALKS" WITH
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CARDBOARD "REBLES" AS PREPEARATION FOR ISLAMIC

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE IN ISTANBUL. SHORT-RUN PROSPECT
IS FOR MORE VIOLENCE.

END SUMMARY

1. RECENT EVENTS GIVEN UNUSUAL PUBLICITY IN MANILA
PRESS HAVE CONVEYED CORRECT IMPRESSION THAT UNREST
IS AGAIN ENTERING AN ACTIVE PHASE IN THE MUSLIM
SOUTH.

2. ON FEB 28 MUSLIMS ABDUCTED BRITISH FEMALE

MISSIONARY, EUNICE DINENT, FROM SMALL BOAT NEAR
BASLIAN ISLAND. ACCORDING MANILA PRESS OF MARCH 2,
LOCAL PC COMMANDER ANNOUNCED THAT KIDNAPPERS ARE
SAME AS THOSE WHO KIDNAPPED JAPANESE STEWARDESS
SEKI ON AUG 25 AND ARE LINKED WITH "SPLINTER GROUP"
OF MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF). MS.
DINENT IS MISSIONARY WITH SUMMER INSTITUTE OF
LINGUISTICS WHICH IS US-BASED ORGANIZATION. SHE
WAS WITH AN AMERICAN COMPANION WHO WAS NOT KIDNAPPED.
EMBASSY WILL REPORT FURTHER DETAILS AS AVAILABLE,
INCLUDING WHETHER RANSOM DEMANDED. AT THIS POINT,
MOTIVES IN LATEST OF AT LEAST FIVE ABDUCTIONS OR
HIJACKINGS IN ZAMBOANGA AREA SINCE LAST SUMMER ARE
ANTHING BUT CLEAR.

3. ACCORDING "BULLETIN TODAY" REBELS ATTACKED A
SUBSTATION OF NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION IN ILIGAN
AREA ON FEB 23, KILLING SEVEN INCLUDING TWO MILITARY
PERSONNEL, NPV SECURITY GUARDS AND CIVILIANS.
ALTHOUGH STORY DOES NOT SAY SO, INSTALLATION WAS
PART OF AGUS RIVER HYDRO POWER COMPLEX WHICH IS KEY FACTOR
IN PLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF MINDANAO.
LOCATION (BARRIO PENDULANAN) IS, WE UNDERSTAND,
ACTUALLY CLOSER TO MARAWI CITY THAN TO ILIGAN CITY.
STORY NOTES THAT PREVIOUS WEEK SEVEN OTHER MILITARY KILLED
IN REBEL ATTACK ON "NON COMBATANT" ARMY ENGINEERS
WORKING ON MAPANTAO IRRIGATION PROJECT ON SHORES OF NEARY LAKE
LANAO.

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4. IN WHAT MAY BE MORE SIGNIFICANT MILITARY DEVELOP-
MENT, LOCAL PRESS CLAIMS THAT MUSLIM "SPY RING"
INCLUDING GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES HAS BEEN ROLLED UP
IN MAGUINDANAO (COTABATO) SECTOR FOLLOWING CAPTURE
OF MNLF "NUMBER THREE" LEADER MUSLIMIN SEMA AND
FOUR OTHER "TOP MNLF PERSONALITIES." FIVE OTHERS
MANAGED TO ESCAPE, ACCORDING STORY WHICH WAS SOURCED

TO ARMY VICE COMMANDER GEN FORTUNATO ABAT. ACCORDING "BULLETIN TODAY" SEMA ALLEGEDLY REVEALED DETAILS OF MNLF ORGANIZATION, COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM, "FOREIGN ADVISERS AND SUPPORTERS," ETC., AND DISCLOSED THAT MNLF HEADQUARTERS HAS RECENTLY BEEN MOVED FROM SABAH TO "SOMEWHERE IN ZAMBOANGA AREA" OF MAINLAND MINDANAO. SEMA ALSO ALLEGEDLY STATED THAT RADIO STATION "VOICE OF MALAYSIA" IS A "GOODWILL BROADCAST OF MALAYSIA TO THE PHILIPPINES" BUT IS BEING "USED" BY THE MNLF THROUGH PROGRAMS PREPARED BY (FILIPINO MUSLIM) ANNOUNCERS. SEMA FURTHER DENIED THAT THE MNLF HAS ANY "TIE UP" WITH THE COMMUNIST NEW PEOPLES' ARMY (NPA). EMBASSY UNDERSTAND FROM WELL-CONNECTED MAGUINDANAO MUSLIM SOURCES THAT SOME PROMINENT MUSLIM CIVILIANS (INCLUDING SOURCE'S UNCLE) HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN WAKE OF SEMA REVELATIONS. SEMA HIMSELF WAS FORMERLY MELCHOR MUSLIM TASK FORCE STAFF MEMBER WHO DEFECTED TO MNLF IN 1973. HIS ARREST WAS REPORT BY WIRE SERVICES ON FEB 11 BUT HAS NOT BEEN MENTIONED IN LOCAL PRESS UP TO NOW.

5. PRESS HAS ALSO CONTINUED TO PUBLICIZE GRUESOME BUS AMBUSHINGS IN ZAMBOANGA PROVINCES. LATEST TOOK PLACE NEAR NEW CALAMBA, LILOY, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE ON FEB 18 WITH EIGHTEEN DEAD ("MOST OF THEM CHRISTIAN WOMEN AND BABIES," ACCORDING "BULLETIN TODAY") AND 26 WOUNDED.

6. BOTH LOCAL PRESS AND WIRE SERVICES HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT GOP WILL RESUME "PEACE TALKS" WITH REBELS AT TICAPUL (ZAMBOANGA) ON MARCH 5. GOP PEACE PANEL HEADED BY REGION TWELVE COMMISSIONER DATUMANONG WILL HOLD "DIALOGUES" WITH "REBEL HOLDOUTS" AT SERIES CONFIDENTIAL

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OF LOCATIONS IN ZAMBOANGA, BASILAN, AND SULU PROVINCES, ACCORDING PRESS.

7. COMMENT: AS NOTED PREVIOUSLY (REF A) APPROACH OF ISLAMIC MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR MAY IS STIMULATING INCREASED ACTIVITY ON BOTH REBEL AND GOVERNMENT SIDE. ATTACK ON PORTION OF AGUS RIVER HYDRO COMPLEX (WHICH AS SUFFERED ONLY MINOR HARASSMENT FROM REBELS IN RECENT MONTHS) COULD, ESPECIALLY IF REPEATED, MAKE ILIGAN A LESS ATTRACTIVE SITE FOR NEW INDUSTRY AND HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF MINDANAO. ON THE OTHER HAND, REPORTED PENETRATION OF MNLF ORGANIZATION IN COTABATO APPEARS TO BE SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL BREAKTHROUGH FOR GOP, ALTHOUGH PROGRESS WILL BE SHORT LIVED AS LONG AS

UNDERLYING MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN PROBLEMS REMAIN UNSOLVED.
AS FOR LATEST ROUND OF PEACE TALKS, THEY ARE UNLIKELY
TO BE MORE CONVINCING THAT LAST YEARS. EMBASSY
IMPRESSION IS THAT DESPITE RECENT BURST OF PUBLICITY
ONLY A SMALL PORTION OF FIGHTING IS BEING REPORTED
IN PRESS. OVERALL PROSPECT IS FOR MORE MINDANAO
DISORDER IN THE WEEKS AHEAD.
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